

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: Celebrating 70 Years of the Grapevine

Happy 70th Birthday to the Grapevine!

"We at the Fellowship Group like to give out a Grapevine to anyone with 30 days of continuous sobriety. Is there anyone here tonight that would like to come up and receive a Grapevine?" I stood up and walked up to the front of the group which was to become my home group the following Friday.

This was my introduction to "Our Meeting in Print". I had no idea what the Grapevine was but it soon became a great friend. To this day I always have a Grapevine in my purse, in a drawer at work and in my car. They are easy to pull out for a quick read and allow me to be discreet. When things become a bit stressful, I don't take a smoke break. I take a Grapevine break. There are stories that are short enough to read in a few minutes or I browse through the cartoons and pictures. When I'm done with it I either leave it "lying around" or I pass it on (it is estimated that 196 000 Grapevines are passed on per month).

The first Grapevine was published June 1944 in New York and it was 15 cents a copy or \$1.50 for a yearly subscription. Six members believed that a newsletter was needed in the early days. The membership was growing rapidly and new groups were starting up which brought up new

ideas from members. The Twelve and Twelve had not yet been written. Groups were struggling to remain open and help members stay sober. Communication between everyone was becoming more of a challenge.

It didn't take long (1945) for the A.A. Groups to make the Grapevine their national journal. In just 4 years it had expanded into Canada and Europe and became "the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous." In 1986 the General Service Conference put forth an advisory action that stated; *"Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through the Conference approval process, the Conference recognizes the A.A. Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous."*

The Grapevine became lovingly known as "Our Meeting in Print" after the editors sent a copy to every known A.A. member in the Armed Forces during World War II. The grateful soldiers came up with the nick name that is printed on the covers to this day.

Co-founder Bill W. and Trustees began discussing what the relationship was to be between the Grapevine, the Groups and the General Service Board. Bill suggested strongly that the Grapevine should be a financially self-supporting and editorially independent non-profit corporation that was connected to the Alcoholic Foundation.

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Focus: Celebrating 70 Years of the Grapevine

A letter was drafted in March 1946 with the following suggestions: the Grapevine be the voice of the Fellowship, the Trustees of the Grapevine suggest and advise but not command, no single group or individual should ever dominate the Grapevine and the Grapevine should print articles expressing the widest differences of opinion on all A.A. topics. Just like the groups and individual members, the Grapevine was to carry the message to alcoholics and practice the A.A. principles in all its affairs.

The Grapevine was incorporated and became one of two publishing divisions of the Alcoholic Foundation. In 1971 it was reincorporated to become one of two independent arms of the General Service Board.

As questions and concerns regarding money, leadership and authority were arising Bill began to write a series of essays in August 1945 that shared on group experience. The April 1946 issue published "Twelve Suggested Points for A.A. Tradition" which was the starting point of the 12 Traditions. Bill wrote another 30 articles prior to the publication of the Twelve and Twelve in 1952.

The Editors were also busy. They decided a definition was needed to clarify what the Fellowship was about for both the members and non-alcoholics. The Preamble was born clearly stating what A.A. was and was not in two brief paragraphs and appeared for the first time in the June 1947 issue.

1948 saw the Grapevine go from the newsletter format to the digest that we still have today.

Many of the stories we see in our literature first appeared in the Grapevine. These include more than a dozen stories in the Big Book (2nd, 3rd and 4th editions) and a few in the "A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate" booklet. Excerpts from the Grapevine, including a lot of Bill's quotes, also appear in the book "As Bill Sees It", the pamphlet "Problems other than Alcohol" (P-35) and the Traditions Checklist. The December 1950 issue

of the Grapevine published the article "Leadership in A.A.: Ever a Vital Need" which was the basis of Concept IX.

The Grapevine has been with us through good and bad times. It has witnessed the growth and all the changes that have occurred within our Fellowship over the last 70 years. The Grapevine followed the formation of the General Service Structure. It also followed the call from both Bill and Dr. Bob for successors in December 1950 which sadly was also the issue that notified us of the passing of Dr. Bob. It kept us informed on the progress of the General Service Conference which became permanent in 1955. Still to this day we can read about A.A. events and celebrations happening around the world.

There is so much more I could share with you but there just isn't the space! If I have peaked your interest at all, please help us celebrate the 70th Birthday of "Our Meeting in Print". Get your group or district involved. Does your Group subscribe to the Grapevine or do you? We all need to get involved to make sure this very valuable 12 Step tool does not become extinct. There are many products the Grapevine offers so please take a moment and visit www.A.A.grapevine.org.

I am so grateful the Grapevine was there on my 30 days of Sobriety. I am even more grateful that men and women who can't get to meetings can have "Our Meeting in Print" in their back pocket - the people in Corrections and Treatment Centres and even that young kid in high school that finds one in the library.

Thank you to all the members that have contributed and/or supported the Grapevine over the years. I love the Grapevine and I hope it is here for many years to come. How about you?

Yours in Love and Service,

Sandi W.
Area 86 Grapevine Chair

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Focus: Special Needs/Remote Communities

THINKING OF FORMING A SPECIAL NEEDS/REMOTE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Forming a Special Needs/Accessibilities Committee in your district is something that is vital for any alcoholic with disabilities.

Making the meeting place more accessible for anyone requiring wheelchairs or sign language interpreters or for shut-ins who are unable to travel to meetings, etc..... the list goes on..... is important.

Here are some suggestions that could help any district that is thinking of forming a Sub-Committee Chair position:

- Determine what the specific needs are.
- Inform A.A. members in your district about what a Special Needs/Accessibilities Committee does and does not do.
- Share your activities and ideas with your Area.
- Let your Telephone Answering Chair know how to reach the Committee if they receive a request for a Special Needs Accessibilities contact, as well as have a link on your district web page.
- Train members how to work with disabled members and treat them with the same warmth and kindness you would with any other members.
- Become familiar with the literature available for people with Special Needs.
- Conduct a survey of your District meeting locations to determine accessible/special needs requirements, and then add this information to your meeting list, web page and Telephone Answering Service.
- Position literature racks and coffee low enough and reachable to any and all members in attendance.
- Consider using microphones and equipment to help ensure that a clear message is heard and received.

There are many other suggestions that are likely to come from active committee members. There are also plenty of helpful hints available in the Workbook found in the Special Needs Kit provided to you by your Area Subcommittee Chair.

So, if you are thinking of adding a Special Needs/Remote Communities Committee in your district, please do not hesitate to get started by contacting your Area 86 Subcommittee Chair.

Janice F.
Area 86 Special Needs/
Remote Communities Chair

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Focus: Inventory—A Guiding Tool for Our Future

The word “Inventory” brings memories to me of when, back in my country of origin, I was a practicing alcoholic and an accountant. At that time I had to perform monthly inventories and since they were done on weekends, which were technically not “business hours”, I felt free to drink while I was working.

Our Big Book talks about doing a moral inventory of ourselves in Step 4 and also a daily inventory in Step 11 as part of the important tasks that need to be done in order to get recovered and stay recovered from alcoholism.

As individuals we perform a moral inventory of all those character defects which the Big Book describes as *“the flaws of our make-up which caused our failure.”* From there we know what we have to work on if we are going to recover. We take an honest look at ourselves, our virtues and our character defects; then we make the necessary changes. We ask our Higher Power to remove the bad stuff and help us to nurture and grow the good stuff within us. Here we use the inventory as a tool that helps to put us on the path to recovery. Once recovered, we move on to help others to get recovered and through Service we make sure that the A.A. program is available to everyone.

What about the Groups and other A.A. entities? Why should they take an inventory?

At the Group level and other A.A. entities, the main objective for taking an inventory is to evaluate our work in carrying the message. As the Pamphlet “The A.A. Group” (P-16) puts it:

“Many groups periodically hold a “group inventory meeting” to evaluate how well they are fulfilling their primary purpose: to help alcoholics recover through A.A.’s suggested Twelve Steps of recovery. Some groups take inventory by examining our Twelve Traditions, one at a time, to determine how well they are living up to these principles.”

At the District, Area and Conference levels, the 12 Concepts are also examined to determine how close those principles are followed in the performance of A.A. Service Work.

*“an inventory
is a tool
for today,
not the past
or the future”*

I use the word ‘Group’ to refer to an A.A. Group, District, Area and Conference because, ultimately, each of those entities represents a group of sober alcoholics working together with a common goal to “help others to recover.”

Since each Group is made of individuals, when working on an inventory, I suggest the following considerations be taken into account:

- ▶ Our Twelve Steps speak of **practicing these principles** in all our affairs. *Here it refers to the Recovery Principles as outlined in the Steps (e.g. Honesty, Humility, Faith, Integrity, Willingness, Acceptance, Service, etc).*
- ▶ Our Twelve Traditions tell us to place **principles before personalities**. *Here it includes the Recovery Principles and the Unity Principles ingrained in our Traditions (e.g. Unity, Autonomy, Self-support, Anonymity, etc).*

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Focus: Inventory—A Guiding Tool for Our Future

» Our Twelve Concepts talk about being **prudent** when managing A.A. affairs.

Here it refers to our six Warranties:

- The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power.
- Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.
- None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.
- That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.
- That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.
- That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit.

To summarize, an inventory is an excellent tool that can be used to find out how we are doing in terms of practicing the Recovery Principles in all our affairs, putting principles before personalities and being prudent in the performance of the Service Work today. It can also show how we can improve.

What I have to remember is that an Inventory is a tool for today, not the past or the future.

If we use this tool efficiently our A.A. fellowship has a brilliant future in continuing to fulfill its primary purpose: *“to help alcoholics recover through A.A.’s suggested Twelve Steps of recovery”*.

Yours in love and Service,

Fredy M.
Area 86 Alternate Delegate - Panel 64

Area 86 / Focus

Published twice a year by
Western Ontario General Service.

Website: www.area86aa.org

Editor:

Newsletter Chair Jeff S.

Contributors:

Sandi W., Fredy M., Heidi P., Janice F., Nikki S.

Contact information:

wogsa86@vaxxine.com

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Focus: Journey into Service

My affinity for alcoholic started at an early age. For as long as I can remember I wanted to grow up fast and be like my much older siblings. My father made his own wine and my older siblings were allowed to have a drink on special occasions. Being allowed to have a 'sip' of wine at the age of 5 made me feel like I belonged to the rest of the fold. For whatever reasons, I always felt like I didn't 'fit in'. That first sip took away those feelings and I found a sense of belonging when I drank that served me for a long time.

I grew up in a small farming community where people 'worked hard and partied hard'. There were lots of country road trips that involved drinking which provided ample training for what amounted to a 3 year drinking binge in university. I drank in social circles but I drank primarily to get drunk. I loved the feeling drinking gave me. Eventually my drinking took me to places I never envisioned – 27 countries in total - as I pursued a 5 year drinking binge around the world.

After that tour my drinking progressed to a new level. I started to isolate. I became unreliable and unemployable. My obsession for alcohol ruled my life. Knowing that this way of living wasn't normal, I tried countless times to quit on my own but never managed to make it through a day without a drink.

I came to A.A. through sheer irony. I met a man who became a dear friend and drinking companion. He would extol the virtues of the 12 Step Program while we were drinking. He had been involved with our fellowship on and off for 20 years and spoke very highly of you people and of the Program. Out of desperation, I called him one day and asked if he would take me to

a meeting and so he did, on May 29th, 2005, which was my 38th birthday.

I don't remember much from that meeting other than the feeling I felt when I walked into the room of the Paris Breakfast Group meeting. There was lots of laughter. People seemed

happy to be there. They welcomed me wholeheartedly. It was that welcome and happy, friendly atmosphere that gave me some hope. Walking home I felt a bit lighter and it was that feeling that kept me coming back for the next year and a half while I continued to drink.

I was intrigued by you people. You were always so welcoming and friendly. You seemed happy. A lot of what you said made sense. I loved the slogans. I loved your stories. I loved how I felt after I left each and every meeting – hopeful. The spirit of the fellowship started to serve me better than any amount of alcohol did. I started to learn about alcoholism. Eventually I started to realize that if I wanted what you people had I would have to do what

*"the highest
you ever get
is sober"*

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

I will never forget meeting Harry G. for the first time. He'd been sober for 59 years which was something far beyond my comprehension. When he looked at me and said "*Kid, I hope you make it,*" I knew he really meant it. What I didn't know at the time was that he was speaking the "*Language of the Heart*" and that it touched me.

I learned to listen and I listened to learn with an open mind. I started to focus on identifying with what people shared rather than compare. I committed myself to becoming honest – first with myself and then with others. I started to do the Steps.

During my first year of sobriety I heard a gentleman extol the virtues of being in Service. I didn't pick up on his enthusiasm at the time. After celebrating my 2nd year birthday I became the GSR for my group and started my journey in Service. I have since thought of that gentleman many times and I have come to identify with his enthusiasm. I love Service work!

In the last 5 years I have had the opportunity to attend Area Assemblies and to serve as District Secretary and Round Up Chair. I am now honoured to be serving District 1 as the Alternate D.C.M. I love learning more and more about our organization and our service structure and I particularly appreciate the voice of experience and enthusiasm from our Past Delegates – '*WOO HOO!*' and all!!

I've heard the Three Legacies summarized in a very simple way: our Steps are designed to prevent suicide, our Traditions are designed to prevent homicide and our Concepts are designed to prevent genocide. I would hate to see our Fellowship die from within and so, I've become committed to being of Service in whatever way I can.

Joining a home group made me a part of A.A. Being in Service entrenches me in A.A. I've also been told, "the highest you ever get is sober" and I like to remember that to keep my ego in check.

I have been blessed with great sponsorship, a fabulous home group and a supportive fellowship that has helped me to bring our 12 Step 'Program of Action' into my daily life. I have met and continue to meet extraordinary people A.A. who have had a profound impact on my life – far from anything I could have ever imagined.

I am continually in awe of what has been so freely given to me. It has inspired me to want to be of Service wherever and whenever I can and, truth be known, I really like hanging out with you fine folk.

Yours in Love and Service,

Heidi P.
Alternate DCM, District 1

AREA OFFICERS

Area Delegate: Jim W.

Area Alternate Delegate: Fredy M.

Area Chair: Dale S.

Area Treasurer: Paul M.

Area Secretary/Registrar: Pat S.

Comments, feedback or articles contact:

www.area86aa.org

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

May 10, 2014

Hosted by District 21 - Hamilton Mountain
Mountain Citadel of the Salvation Army
835 Stone Church Road East, Hamilton, Ontario
Meeting starts at 10 a.m.
Accommodations are at the Holiday Inn Express
51 Keefer Court Hamilton, Ontario L8E 4V4
Phone 1-877-660-8550 or 1-905-578-1212
Rooms are booked under W.O.G.S.
Block will be held until April 10, 2014.
Rates are \$94.00 plus tax.

August 9, 2014

Hosted by District 9 - Georgian Bay
Georgian Shores United Church
997 4th Avenue East, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5W9
Meeting starts at 10 a.m.
Accommodations are at the Comfort Inn
9th Avenue East. Owen Sound N4K 6N4
Phone 1-866- 599-5699 or 1-519-371-5500
Block is under Area 86 Western Ontario.
Room Rates are \$115.99 plus tax.
There are also first floor rooms available at a rate of \$121.00.
Inquire at time of booking.

Eastern Canada Regional Forum - August 15 - 17, 2014

This first time forum is being held at the Sheraton Laval Hotel in Laval Quebec.
Registration is FREE!
Visit www.aa.org for more information.

Fall Assembly - October 24th, 25th & 26th, 2014

London Hilton, 300 King Street, (King St & Wellington St. N), London, Ontario
Phone 1-800-210-9336 or 1-800-445-8667
Rooms are booked under Group Reservation W.O.G.S.
Rooms must be booked on or before October 2, 2014
to receive the preferred room rate (\$119.00/night + 13% HST = \$134.47).
Registration begins at 8 a.m.

Agenda Items must be received by the Area Chairperson on or before August 27th 2014

Area 86 website: www.area86aa.org